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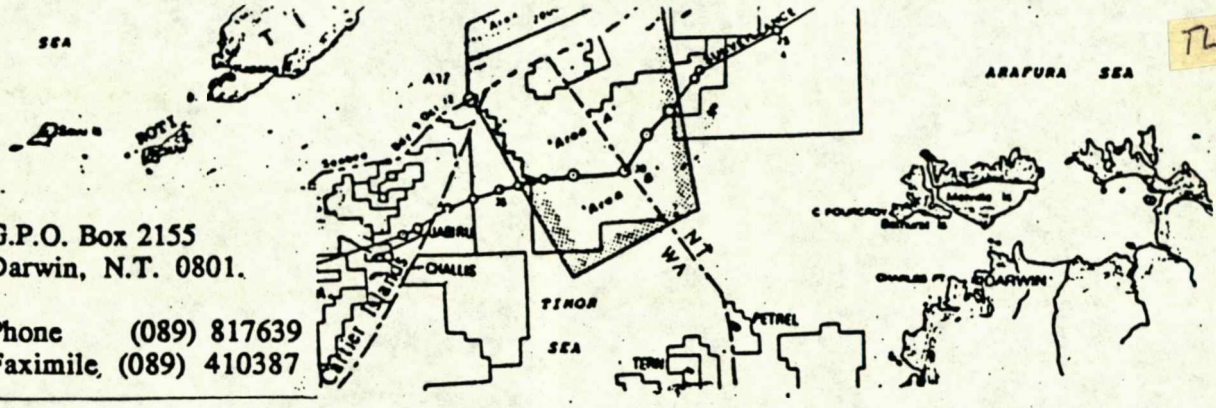

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FORUM CALLS FOR SUSPENSION OF TIMOR GAP TREATY

A two-day forum, held in Darwin over the weekend, convened by the Timor Gap Coalition to investigate the many issues related to the Timor Gap Zone of Co-operation was very well attended with at least 130 people participating.

Interstate visitors who attended the meeting included: Dr Jose Luis Gomes - Portuguese Ambassador to Australia; Pat Walsh - Director, Human Rights Camapign, Australian Council for Overseas Aid; Gordon MacIntosh - former Senator ; and Jose Ramos Horta - former United Nations lobbyist for an independent East Timor.

Resolutions unanimously passed on the 2nd day of the forum are detailed below.

"This forum calls for the suspension of the Timor Gap Zone of Cooperation Treaty (the Treaty) until the conflict in East Timor is resolved and the East Timorese people exercise their "Right of Self Determination" acknowledged by the United Nations.

"In its present form the Treaty violates international law on the grounds of Indonesia's invasion and occupation of East Timor by force. We therefore reject the contents of the statement provided to the Forum by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Senator Gareth Evans, in which he defends the Treaty."

"The Forum calls on the Australian government to give its full and active support to the United Nations to ensure the resolution of conflict in East Timor, instead of putting public resources into the exploitation of the petroleum potential of Timor Gap."

"We affirm our support for any action the Portuguese Government takes to stop the implementation of the Treaty in the International Court of Justice."

The forum was also concerned with the environmental impact of the rapid expansion of the oil industry, especially the increase in Greenhouse gases from the burning of fossil fuel, and the potential for marine pollution.

"The forum calls for a comprehensive and public environmental impact assessment of the implications for exacerbation of the Greenhouse Effect and marine pollution before any exploration is undertaken in the Timor Gap, subject to a just settlement of the conflict and occupation in East Timor."

For further information contact Rob Wesley Smith on (089) 817639 or 812532.